



American  
Heart  
Association.

# WORKPLACE SUPPORT

for Parents-to-Be and Families  
With Infants and Toddlers



AN IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE FOR EMPLOYERS

POWERED  
BY



American Heart Association.  
CEO Roundtable

# WORKPLACE SUPPORT

for Parents-to-Be and Families  
With Infants and Toddlers

AN IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE FOR EMPLOYERS

## — TABLE OF CONTENTS —

Executive Summary .....	3
Importance of the Prenatal-to-3 Period for Lifelong Health and Well-being .....	3
The Business Case for Investing in Prenatal-to-3 Supports and Policies .....	4
Proven Workplace Strategies .....	4
Emerging Workplace Strategies: A Sample from the CEO Roundtable .....	7
<b>Company Spotlight:</b> Tyson Foods Provides Onsite Child Care .....	7
<b>Company Spotlight:</b> Caliber Supports Nutrition Security in Communities .....	8
<b>Company Spotlight:</b> American Heart Association Provides Paid Family and Medical Leave and Breastfeeding Support to Employees .....	9
Additional Resources .....	10
Take Action .....	10
Acknowledgments .....	11
References .....	11



## — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY —

Employees with young children make up nearly 80% of the labor force.<sup>1</sup> Supporting expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers in the workplace is not only good for business, it is essential. Many employers are implementing evidence-based strategies to support their employees. This includes providing access to quality childcare, paid family and medical leave, and nutrition security resources. Additionally, companies are testing innovative strategies and listening to employees through surveys and market research to assist their staff with accommodations that will improve the lifelong health and wellbeing of young children, beginning prenatally.

The American Heart Association's CEO Roundtable, a leadership collaborative of nearly 50 CEOs, prioritizes health equity in the workplace, including equitable policies and practices focusing on the prenatal-to-three population. This issue brief is an implementation resource for employers who want to better support expectant parents and families who have infants and toddlers.



## — IMPORTANCE OF THE PRENATAL-TO-3 PERIOD FOR LIFELONG HEALTH AND WELL-BEING —

Growing research shows that investing in the early stages of life, including prenatally, has a profound impact on lifelong health and well-being. Fewer than half of adults start pregnancy with ideal cardiovascular health.<sup>2</sup> Due to longstanding social and structural inequities, pregnancy-related mortality rates are higher for non-Hispanic Black and American Indian/Alaska Native women than for women in other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

There are also substantial geographic differences in pregnancy-related mortality rates. The southeastern part of the United States, including rural areas in Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta, experience the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality.<sup>4,5,6</sup> Maternal mortality has seemingly obvious adverse consequences for surviving family members.<sup>7</sup>

Following birth, the brain development that takes place during the early part of a child's life is especially important, as it is the foundation of learning, behavior and health.<sup>8</sup> The environment a child grows up in also impacts their heart and lung function, digestive and immune systems, and physical growth.<sup>9</sup> When they are supported in their earliest years, infants and toddlers grow into healthy kids who are ready to achieve in school and life. In addition, our communities, workforce and economy become stronger and more productive.

## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INVESTING IN PRENATAL-TO-3 SUPPORTS AND POLICIES

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role that quality childcare plays in supporting the workforce. According to a national survey conducted in January 2022, 71% of families with young children reported that difficulty finding childcare impacted their ability to work.<sup>10</sup> By spring 2022, nearly 40% of female caregivers had stopped working or reduced their work responsibilities/hours due to persistent childcare challenges.<sup>11</sup>



***“The infant-toddler childcare crisis now costs families, businesses and taxpayers a total of \$122 billion in lost earnings, productivity and revenue every year.”***

*- Nancy Fishman of ReadyNation and the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers, citing their 2023 report.<sup>12</sup>*

The pandemic also underscored the need to support expectant parents, infants and toddlers through workplace benefits. A 2023 annual survey of employers found increases in the number of organizations offering paid parental leave, onsite lactation facilities and flexible work arrangements.<sup>13</sup> In addition, benefits to support fertility and family-building have increased, with 47% of very large employers – those with 5,000 or more employees – providing this coverage in 2021 and nearly all reporting a negligible cost impact.<sup>14</sup>

Offering family-supportive benefits can help demonstrate an organization’s commitment to equity. When businesses support expectant parents and employees with infants and toddlers, our workforce and communities become stronger.

## PROVEN WORKPLACE STRATEGIES

The following workplace strategies are supported by scientific evidence:



### **SUPPORT**

Access to Quality,  
Affordable Childcare



### **OFFER**

Paid Family and  
Medical Leave



### **PROMOTE**

Nutrition Security  
for Families

## PROVEN WORKPLACE STRATEGIES CONTINUED

1

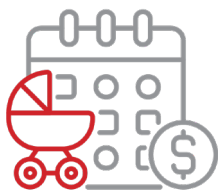
**Support Access to Quality, Affordable Childcare**

Stark disparities in infants' and toddlers' access to, experience in and outcomes during and after early learning vary drastically based on a child's race and ethnicity, where they live, what languages they speak and where they are from.<sup>15</sup> When working parents have access to quality, affordable childcare, employers and employees benefit.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, investments in high-quality child care result in wide-ranging positive business outcomes, including increased employee performance, improved recruitment and retention, and future organizational growth.<sup>16</sup> Employers can support working parents with infants and toddlers by:<sup>17</sup>

- » investing in backup care options for unforeseen last-minute childcare needs;
- » providing childcare vouchers or offering subsidies to help working parents access or afford locally available childcare; or
- » providing quality child care where parents need it – onsite at work.

2

**Offer Paid Family and Medical Leave**

Black and Latino/Hispanic families report less access to paid leave than white families,<sup>18</sup> which may reflect a lack of access or a lack of awareness or understanding of available benefits. Offering employees paid leave after the birth or adoption of a child makes it more likely that they will reenter the workforce within a year.<sup>19</sup> Businesses that offered paid leave may also see increased productivity, profits, retention and morale, and decreased turnover.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, offering paid leave may make small businesses more competitive with larger companies.<sup>21</sup> Employers should consider the following in providing paid leave to their staff:<sup>22</sup>

- » Equitably offer medical leave, caregiving leave and parental leave;
- » Cover as many employees as possible;
- » Offer sufficient wage replacement, ensuring lower-income workers have enough wage replacement to allow them to take advantage of paid leave policies;
- » Offer sufficient and easily available time off to meet worker needs;

## PROVEN WORKPLACE STRATEGIES CONTINUED

- » Guarantee job protections and anti-retaliation protections;
- » Allow gender-neutral parental leave to promote gender equity in the workplace;
- » Include culturally, linguistically and health literacy-appropriate benefits education and awareness campaign and resources.

3

### Promote Nutrition Security for Families



When parents and caregivers are equipped with the resources they need to take care of their children, they are more likely to live full, healthy lives. Unfortunately, 12.8% of households reported having limited access to sufficient food in 2022, with the rate higher (16.7%) for households with children under age six.<sup>23</sup> Among people with employer-sponsored health insurance, 7.7% experienced food insecurity; however, the prevalence is much higher for employees with lowest household income.<sup>24</sup>

Federal nutrition assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), help millions of families put food on their tables during uncertain times. In fact, more than three-quarters of SNAP beneficiaries are working families.<sup>25</sup> However, unexpected events like a spouse losing a job or a health or other family emergency may temporarily change a family's income – and programs like SNAP or WIC can become a lifeline. Employers can support expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers in the workplace by:<sup>26</sup>

- » Implementing benefit programs that directly support food and nutrition needs;
- » Ensuring benefits or human resource departments can direct families to appropriate state or local agencies to determine eligibility or apply for nutrition assistance programs; and
- » Partnering with non-profit organizations that work to combat food insecurity.

## EMERGING WORKPLACE STRATEGIES:

### A SAMPLE FROM THE CEO ROUNDTABLE

In spring 2023, the American Heart Association polled CEO Roundtable member companies to gain insight into the most common practices employers used to support expectant parents and employees with infants and toddlers. Of the 19 companies that responded, the top five strategies are listed below:

#### TOP FIVE STRATEGIES

- 1 Paid parental leave (*n=17*)
- 2 Paid sick leave (*n=15*)
- 3 Breastfeeding supports beyond federal requirements (*e.g., breast milk shipping services for business travel*) (*n=13*)
- 4 Maternal mental health support (*e.g., employee resource groups or health care referrals*) (*n=11*)
- 5 Flexible hours (*e.g., phased back-to-work for new parents*) (*n=11*)



Cost and training needed on establishing or implementing effective supportive programs were identified as the biggest barriers to adding additional benefits. However, overall, member companies reported **positive changes from providing family-supportive policies and practices** in areas including employee satisfaction, staff retention, diverse and inclusive staff recruitment, staff productivity, staff turnover rates and company profits.

## COMPANY SPOTLIGHT:

### TYSON FOODS PROVIDES ONSITE CHILD CARE

For Tyson Foods, supporting parents with onsite child care was a smart business move.

***“As a manufacturing company, one of our biggest challenges is expanding the labor pool. We need more people to enter the workforce and we want people to stay longer,”***

– Garrett Dolan, senior manager of human resources

In 2021, Tyson Foods took a major step to provide greater access to affordable childcare for frontline workers and their families. The company announced it would pilot an onsite child care and learning

## COMPANY SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED

facility at its Humboldt, Tennessee poultry processing plant. It also engaged a partnership with two local nonprofits in Amarillo, Texas to provide free childcare to the children of late-night shift workers.

The Humboldt Tyson Learning Center opened in July 2023 and cost an estimated \$5 million to construct. The state-of-the-art facility can support more than 100 children 5 and younger and employs 20 staff operated and managed by KinderCare. Tyson Foods subsidizes the tuition to help lower the cost for its team members.

“Childcare is a business issue and a community issue,” Dolan said. “I remember asking the [Humboldt] mayor, ‘If Tyson could do one thing for the community, what should we do?’ He said, ‘Childcare.’ He believed that helping children prepare for school would automatically improve the school system.” Learn more with a Learning Center [virtual tour](#) or read [parent testimonials](#).

## COMPANY SPOTLIGHT: CALIBER SUPPORTS NUTRITION SECURITY IN COMMUNITIES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies provided employees and their families with resources to help navigate the uncertainty of pandemic era events. Caliber, which includes Caliber Collision, Caliber Auto Care and Caliber Auto Glass, made sure to prioritize nutrition security among the supports the company offered.

Caliber directed families to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s website to learn about eligibility and the application for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This builds on the company’s long-standing commitment to fighting family food insecurity. In April 2023, Caliber hosted its 12th annual national food drive to support local communities, donating an additional \$0.25 for every dollar raised. What began as a grassroots effort initiated by a caring employee in 2011 has evolved into a food drive at more than 1,600 Caliber centers across 41 states.

***“We are a national company, but we care about our communities. We know that when we provide nutrition security to families with infants and toddlers, our businesses and communities thrive.”***

- Leslie Wade, vice president of total rewards—compensation and benefits





## COMPANY SPOTLIGHT: AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION PROVIDES PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE AND BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES

At the American Heart Association, the Parents@Heart ERG was formed during the Covid-19 pandemic to support the needs of parents, grandparents and staff balancing work, family and the responsibilities of parenting.

Employee resource groups, or ERGs, allow employees to connect on various issues. Recognizing the importance of paid leave for parents and caregivers, this group was influential in advocating for a new employer-sponsored benefit.

The AHA's paid family and medical leave policy offers up to four weeks of paid leave at 100% of the employee's base pay to care for or bond with a new child, for placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care or to care for a spouse, domestic partner, child or parent with a serious health condition. The policy coordinates with state paid family and medical leave policies and pays the difference between the state payment so the employee can receive up to four weeks of full pay.



***“Almost 200 employees have utilized the paid family and medical leave benefit since it was implemented in October 2021. What’s exciting is that our executive leadership heard from our parents on staff and prioritized this as a benefit.”***

- Bryn Seay, benefits director

The AHA expanded its support for new parents in 2023 when it launched a policy to support lactating individuals. Employees who are nursing and required to fly for business purposes are reimbursed the cost of shipping breast milk.

“The AHA recognizes the importance of supporting nursing parents who travel for business, and we are dedicated to providing resources for parents in their new beginnings,” said Katherine Neverdousky, senior vice president of human resources.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CHILDCARE

- » [The Childcare Roadmap for Employers](#)  
– U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- » [\\$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis](#)  
– ReadyNation

### PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

- » [The Business Case for Paid Family and Medical Leave](#)  
– A Better Balance
- » [Paid Family and Medical Leave Fact Sheet](#)  
– U.S. Department of Labor

### NUTRITION SECURITY

- » [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#)  
– U.S. Department of Agriculture
- » [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#)  
– U.S. Department of Agriculture

### BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

- » [Lactation Accommodations Laws & Policies – What Every Manager Should Know](#)  
– Public Health Law Center

### OTHER

- » [National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers](#)
- » [Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center](#)
- » [Voices for Healthy Kids, American Heart Association](#)

## TAKE ACTION

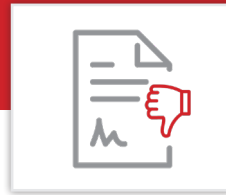
Businesses and employers have a powerful role in advancing policies on behalf of infants, toddlers, and expectant parents. Ready to use your voice?



[Sample op-ed](#)



[Letter to the editor in agreement](#)



[Letter to the editor in disagreement](#)



[Meeting with decision makers](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the AHA CEO Roundtable [members](#) for their support.

We wish to thank the following people who contributed to this issue brief:

### COMPANY SPOTLIGHTS

**Garrett Dolan**, Senior Manager of Human Resources, *Tyson Foods*

**Nancy Fishman**, Senior Advisor, *ReadyNation – Council for a Strong America*

**Katherine Neverdousky**, SVP of Human Resources, *American Heart Association*

**Bryn Seay**, Benefits Director, *American Heart Association*

**Leslie Wade**, Vice President of Total Rewards – Compensation and Benefits, *Caliber*

### AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION STAFF

**Barbara Entl, MD**, Science and Medicine Advisor

**Lisa Langas**, Program Director, CEO Roundtable

**Melina Quintanilla**, Program Manager, Health Equity

**Dina Rogers**, National Director, Writing and Editorial

**Stephanie Scarmo, PhD, MPH**, National Sr. Director of Policy Research

**Eduardo Sanchez, MD, MPH, FAHA**, Chief Medical Officer for Prevention

**national  
collaborative  
for infants  
& toddlers**

This issue brief was created in collaboration with the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment Characteristics of Families: Table 5. Employment status of the population by sex, marital status, and presence and age of own children under 18, 2021-22 annual averages. Updated April 2023. Available at: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t05.htm>. \*Note the participation rate for the civilian noninstitutional population with their own children under age 6 was 78.5% in 2021-2022.
- 2 Cameron NA, Freaney PM, Wang MC, Perak AM, Dolan BM, O'Brien MJ, et al. Geographic differences in prepregnancy cardiometabolic health in the United States, 2016 through 2019. *Circulation*. 2022; 145(7):549-551. doi: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.121.057107.
- 3 Petersen EE, Davis NL, Goodman D, Cox S, Syverson C, Seed K, et al. Racial/ethnic disparities in pregnancy-related deaths—United States, 2007-2016. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2019; 68:762-765. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6835a3.
- 4 Smith BL, Sandlin AT, Bird TM, Steelman SC, Magann EF. Maternal mortality in the Mississippi Delta region. *South Med J*. 2014; 107:275-279. doi: 10.1097/SMJ.000000000000102.
- 5 Callaghan WM. Geographic variation of reproductive health indicators and outcomes in the United States: place matters. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*. 2014; 211:278-284. doi: 10.1016/j.ajog.2014.06.043.

## REFERENCES CONTINUED

- 6 Kozhimannil KB, Interrante JD, Henning-Smith C, Admon LK. Rural-urban differences in severe maternal morbidity and mortality in the US, 2007-15. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2019; 38:2077-2085. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00805
- 7 National Research Council (US) Committee on Population. The Consequences of Maternal Morbidity and Maternal Mortality: Report of a Workshop. Reed HE, Koblinsky MA, Mosley WH, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2000. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK225434/>.
- 8 Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families. May 2016. Available at: [https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/From\\_Best\\_Practices\\_to\\_Breakthrough\\_Impacts-4.pdf](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/From_Best_Practices_to_Breakthrough_Impacts-4.pdf).
- 9 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Connecting the Brain to the Rest of the Body: Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health are Deeply Intertwined. Working Paper No. 15. June 2020. Available at: [https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/wp15\\_health\\_FINALv2.pdf](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/wp15_health_FINALv2.pdf).
- 10 RAPID Survey Project. Child Care Difficulties on the Rise for Parents of Young Children. March 2022. Available at: <child-care-difficulties-factsheet-mar2022.pdf> (squarespace.com).
- 11 RAPID Survey Project. Forced Out of Work: the Pandemic's Persistent Effects on Women and Work. June 2022. Available at: <rapid-women-and-work-factsheet-june2022.pdf> (squarespace.com).
- 12 ReadyNation; Council for a Strong America. \$122 billion: the growing, annual cost of the infant-toddler child care crisis. February 2023. Available at: [https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/1598/05d917e2-9618-4648-a0ee-1b35d17e2a4d.pdf?1674854626&inline=%20filename=%22\\$122%20Billion:%20The%20Growing,%20Annual%20Cost%20of%20the%20Infant-Toddler%20Child%20Care%20Crisis.pdf%22](https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/1598/05d917e2-9618-4648-a0ee-1b35d17e2a4d.pdf?1674854626&inline=%20filename=%22$122%20Billion:%20The%20Growing,%20Annual%20Cost%20of%20the%20Infant-Toddler%20Child%20Care%20Crisis.pdf%22).
- 13 Society for Human Resource Management. 2023 Employee Benefits Survey: Executive Summary. 2023. Available at: <https://shrm-res.cloudinary.com/image/upload/v1685728116/Employee%20Benefits/CPR-222434-Employee-Benefits-Executive-Summary-FINAL-for-PUBLICATION.pdf>.
- 14 Mercer Consulting. Family-friendly benefits take off. February 2022. Available at: [https://www.mercer.com/en-us/insights/us-health-news/family-friendly-benefits-take-off/?size=n\\_20\\_n](https://www.mercer.com/en-us/insights/us-health-news/family-friendly-benefits-take-off/?size=n_20_n).
- 15 Children's Equity Project. Start with equity. 14 priorities to dismantle systemic racism in early care and education. December 2021. Available at: <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-12/14-priorities-equity-121621.pdf>.
- 16 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Employer Roadmap: Childcare Solutions for Working Parents. October 2023. Available at: [https://chamber-foundation.files.svdcn.com/production/documents/ECE-Employer-Roadmap\\_March-2022\\_web.pdf?dm=1704748799](https://chamber-foundation.files.svdcn.com/production/documents/ECE-Employer-Roadmap_March-2022_web.pdf?dm=1704748799).
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Boyens C, Karpman M, Smalligan J. Access to paid leave is lowest among workers with the greatest needs. The Urban Institute. July 2022. Available at: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/access-paid-leave-lowest-among-workers-greatest-needs#:~:text=Access%20to%20paid%20leave%20is%20highly%20skewed%20>.
- 19 Houser L and Vartanian TP. Pay matters: The positive economic impacts of paid family leave for families, businesses and the public: Rutgers Center for Women and Work; 2012. Available at: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/CWW/Publications/CWW%20Paid%20Leave%20Brief%20Jan%202012.pdf>.
- 20 Appelbaum E and Milkman R. Leaves that pay: Employer and worker experiences with paid family leave in California. 2011. Available at: <https://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-family-leave-1-2011.pdf>.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 American Heart Association. Policy statement on paid family and medical leave. June 2021. Available at: <https://www.heart.org/-/media/Files/About-Us/Policy-Research/Policy-Positions/Access-to-Healthcare/Paid-Family-and-Medical-Leave-Policy-Guidance.pdf>.
- 23 Rabbitt MP, Hales LJ, Burke MP, Coleman-Jensen A. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States in 2022 (Report No. ERR-325). October 2023. Available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/107703/err-325.pdf?v=2635.4>.
- 24 JP Morgan Chase & Co. Health Disparities in employer-sponsored insurance. July 2022. Available at: <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmc/jpmorgan-chase-and-co/who-we-are-our-business/documents/jpmc-morgan-health-norc-report-ada.pdf>.
- 25 U.S. Census Bureau. Most families with 2018 SNAP benefits had at least one person working. July 2020. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/07/most-families-that-received-snap-benefits-in-2018-had-at-least-one-person-working.html>.
- 26 Mercer Consulting. Confronting food insecurity in the workforce. September 2022. Available at: <https://www.mercer.com/en-us/insights/us-health-news/confronting-food-insecurity-in-the-workforce/>.